

(Washington DC) This afternoon, the Republican controlled House passed the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill (H.R. 5385.) But, Democrats were not allowed to offer an alternative that would have increased funding for our military and veterans' health care. Earlier this week, Republicans pushed through the House a budget that cuts veterans' funding by \$6 billion over 5 years, and H.R. 5385 was in the same vein.

"The men and women currently wearing our nation's uniform and those who wore it in years past have protected and defended us," said Congressman Charlie Gonzalez. "For doing so, we made a promise to provide care for the injuries they sustained serving our nation. Yet, this bill goes back on that promise by failing to properly fund programs for military personnel and veterans. This bill will make life more difficult for the veterans and military personnel in San Antonio.

Every year, we have had to fight just to keep veterans' funding equal to rate of inflation let alone meeting the increasing cost of treating our men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. We owe the best care available to those wounded in the line of duty and the Republicans failed to do that."

The Democratic alternative to H.R. 5385 would have given our fighting men and women more health care funding by : 1) providing \$1.8 billion more to meet the costs of returning veterans and veterans from prior conflicts, including mental health and prosthetics; 2) providing \$735 million more to make sure that military retirees do not face having their TRICARE fees doubled and tripled; and 3) eliminating the budget gimmick that designated \$507 million for 20 military construction projects as "emergency" spending in the bill, even though they were requested in the Administration budget. The funding in the Democratic alternative would have been financed by rolling back portions of the preferential tax treatment (H.R. 4297) President Bush signed into law this week.

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